



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

18-20 Trinity Street
Hartford, CT 06106
Tel. (860) 240-8330
Fax (860) 240-0315
E-Mail: lprac@cga.ct.gov
Web Site: www.cga.ct.gov/lprac

Testimony Supporting Bill SB-985

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Associate Legislative Analyst, Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission

Labor and Public Employee Committee, March 3, 2015
Hartford, CT

Good afternoon Senator Comes, Representative Tercyak, and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee; my name is Orlando Rodriguez and I am an Associate Legislative Analyst with the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). LPRAC supports Senate bill 985 An Act Concerning Barbershops and Apprenticeships.

Connecticut has state-approved apprenticeship programs for several skilled trades; however, we do not have an apprenticeship program for barbering. Special Act 13-12 An Act Concerning a Barbershop Apprenticeship Program required the Connecticut State Apprenticeship Council, "...to study the feasibility of establishing a barbershop apprenticeship program within the Department of Labor."¹ This study reported, "...the general consensus was that given the right conditions, registered apprenticeship can again be a viable path to licensing of barbers."²

This bill creates an apprenticeship program specifically for barbering as existed before 1980. LPRAC recommends recreating a similar program within the Department of Labor, which already manages numerous apprenticeship programs.

The Great Recession in Connecticut was particularly difficult for Hispanic workers. While the unemployment rate for whites peaked at 7.5 percent in 2010, unemployment among Hispanics peaked at a dramatically higher 17.8 percent in 2011.³ Currently, Connecticut has the 6th highest unemployment rate for Hispanics nationwide.⁴

It is difficult to become a barber in Connecticut since the Connecticut Technical High School System ended its program in barbering. This bill is one tangible step to broaden access to employable skills, such as barbering, for the many Latinos in Connecticut who cannot find work. The committee should also consider creating tax incentives to incentivize Master Barbers to employ an apprentice, as is done with other apprenticeship programs.

LPRAC thanks this committee for its interest in this topic and welcomes the opportunity to create more options for Latinos in Connecticut to earn gainful employment including a barber apprenticeship program.

¹ Special Act No. 13-12: An Act Concerning a Barbershop Apprenticeship Program

² A report on the feasibility of establishing a barbershop apprenticeship program within the Labor Department, February 2014

³ <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/econ14workingct.pdf>

⁴ ACS 2013 1-yr table S2301.